

and always will have probably so much that they can't count it. Why, Pardzo, there are crowds of people East that worry and contrive to invent new ways to spend money, and then can't get rid of it as fast as it piles up on 'em! Sounds funny, don't it? The Idle Rich, that's the outfit.

"We began to strike occasional specimens of the brand as far west as Chicago; but the real East is where you find 'em. They'll come along in an automobile or a thing they call a tallyho, or you'll see them cruising offshore in everything from a catboat to a steam yacht big enough to carry six hundred cattle. They chute the chutes, loop the gap, go up in aeroplanes, race motor-cars, and shock one another by doing things you nor me wouldn't think of in a month of Sundays,—that's their fun.

"Concoct something new for 'em, and your fortune's made. They're not afraid to tackle anything. If you think they are, it's your bet. No, Sir, the more dangerous the better they like it. You propose to blow up a ten-story building with dynamite, and have all that are on the roof at the time drop from the clouds in parachutes, and see how quick they'll line up to buy tickets. They just don't know what to do to keep busy, that's all.

"I remember it was in July, and the weather nice and settled. The main bunch of the Doc Carson outfit had gone on ahead by train. Bruce decided that him and me would ride our plugs through and see the country, a two days' jaunt. Just so we were on hand by a certain date, the Doc didn't object. It was great! We enjoyed it mightily.

"When we came to a nice little creek trickling across the road under a stone bridge, in the big woods, with green grass all around, we pinned out our horses, took a wash in the creek, and stretched ourselves out on the grass by the side of the road to take a nap, snug and cozy as out home.

"We did look pretty trampish, I guess, with our clothes coated with dust and both of us already owing money to the first barber we might happen to run across. We didn't bargain for anything like what really happened, though.

WHAT woke us was a chatter of talk. We sat up a little, and found we had company. One of these carryall automobiles about the size of a summer coach on the narrow gage had stopped in the road, and the people in it were evidently holding a jabber match about us. There were eight of them besides the engineer,—three women folks and five men, all at the age of unaccountability, dressed for parade, and hunting trouble.

"When they saw us rouse up they yow-yowed some more, and then yanked open the little car doors, clattered down, and frolicked over. We didn't get up immediately. I looked at Bruce, and he just wiggled his shoulders and tossed his hair back as much as to say, 'They saw us first. Let 'em enjoy themselves.' Now what do you think they done? They all piled out and came over, as I said.

"Here they all come until they got close: then one young woman—and say, Pardzo, she was a Fairy Princess for looks too, I noticed that—floated up to Bruce and asked right off the bat:

"What is your excuse for being a tramp, Sir?"

"The rest stopped their noise, crowded up, and listened, holding their breath. Bruce got his six feet of shagginess leisurely into a standing position and looked her in the eye. I guess he was bigger than she sort of expected; for she looked like she was a little bit scared of him. I wondered what he would say; in fact, I couldn't right positively make head or tail of it, anyhow. But I heard his booming barytone after awhile, and he was saying in his own lazy way:

"Why, I don't see where you all come in, I'm sure, Miss—what is the name, please?"

"Scruggins," she said, "Marie Scruggins."

"Harve," said Bruce, looking over my head into the woods and keeping his face as straight as a deacon's, "introduce me to Miss Marie Scruggins, you Comanche! Where's your manners?"

"I scrambled to my feet at once. 'With great animosity,' I said. 'Allow me to present, to make you acquainted—well, shake hands with my friend Big Bill Biggs, from Texas.'

"They shook hands, and Bruce bowed and scraped most polite.

"Now then, state your complaint," Bruce said.

"That started the gabble works again. The rest of Marie's outfit commenced crowding and talking like they'd had a signal, and they had me milling in about a minute. I was edged out until I found myself straggling outside of the main corral; so I cut it and strayed over to strike up a line of talk with the engineer, who seemed to be somewhat out of it, like myself. From appearances also he was about the only member of the party who was not absolutely bughouse. I importuned him.

"What kind of a roundup of nutties is this here you're hauling, if I may ask?"

"He was somewhat sewed up at first; but loosened on second thoughts, and I found out all about it. They were just a delegation of the Idle Rich, out for amusement, that was all. As near as the honk manipulator

could gather, they had been to one of these vaudeville shows somewhere a few days before, and had seen a moving picture of a tramp that had been snatched out of oblivion by some good-hearted old party, and who had reciprocated by murdering off the whole household, stealing all the heirlooms, and ducking out by the light of the burning homestead most ungrateful.

"The honk man said they'd been arguing about the thing all morning, and had finally made a bet in which the girl agreed to reform the first tramp they flushed. If he proved tractable, she won; if not, she paid for eight suppers—or dinners, I believe they call them there.

"She took the stand that no man would turn her down unless he was already reformed, in which case she was to have another shot; while the other parties to the argument contended that nobody outside of a moving picture would let a stranger reform 'em unless force was used: it would be too hazardous, even for a tramp.

AFTER gathering in all that data I ambled back over with the expectation of mingling in the fun maybe to the extent of applying for a bunk in the orphan's home myself; but the other candidate for honors didn't seem to be matriculating very fast.

"Bruce wasn't saying much of anything. He didn't need to: Marie was doing the talk act.

"You say you are very well content as you are?" she was saying. 'Shame on you, you great, hulking rascal! What benefit are you to society?' A lazy, useless fellow, sneaking about from place to place, living anyhow you may! A parasite is what you are, stealing your sustenance from others! Aren't you strong and well? Then why shouldn't you do your share of the work of the world in which you live?"

"Yes," put in one skim-milk-colored young rooster, 'these hoboes are very dishonest, you know. They actually steal laundry out of poor people's yards, I've heard. By Jove, they do!'

"I elbowed my way in and stood alongside Bruce. 'Let me in on it,' I said. 'What's up?'

"I've been offered a job," Bruce grinned, 'pulling weeds.'

"I've offered you—companion," the girl said, without cracking a smile, 'a place of honest work,—work at cutting the lawns and making himself useful around this gentleman's country house.' She indicated one of the tenderfeet standing near. 'And this person refuses to consider it. Why? Because he is a lazy loafer and would rather idle away his time as a tramp—a nobody!'

"How much a day?" I queried. 'He's pretty husky!'

"We should determine that later," she said. 'It is enough that the opportunity is offered. A last invitation—' She addressed Bruce, 'Will you take the place and try to make a man of yourself?'

"Bruce shook his head solemnly.

"One smart young man tossed him a quarter at that, laughing as he did so. 'Then take this and get yourself a decent drink, Fellow,' he said. 'Come along, Dorothy, you've lost your bet. Let these poor wretches go: they are a waste of our valuable time.'

BRUCE clouded up pretty dark and threatening, gave the fellow a look, and shook back his hair. 'Now you people had your say,' he commenced in his big, clear voice, 'let me tell you a few things. You come out here and get out of your car uninvited to call me a parasite and a loafer. You take it for granted that I'm a tramp. A tramp is somebody worth while compared to you.

"What do you do to contribute to your own support? What part of the world's work do you perform? Who and what are you, you pitiful fools? You weak, pampered wrecks of what might have been men and women! What good have you ever done to anybody?"

"You spend your fathers' money like water while people in your city starve to death in their hovels. You rail and jeer at everything but yourselves. This weakling here offering me money—God! What do I want with your money? You may see the day you will need it yourselves, you stunted milksops and brazen hussies—"

"That's enough!" One of the bunch stepped out, white and fierce as you please. It tickled me to see him, so that I almost yelled right out. He looked like a poodle pup. He was mad.

"Just you say another word like that—just one more word, and I—I'll trounce you, you tramp!"

"Bruce laughed in a bellow that made the woods ring. 'Trounce me?' he said. 'You poor little wart! Did you hear what he said, Harve?'

"We both laughed at that. I did think for a minute that we were going to have a scrap with the whole five. They looked mighty gloomy at us, and the three women folks made a scatter for the carryall; but the men reneged just in time to save their eyesight. Then Bruce got mad.

"Get into that buggy now, you pups!" he roared at them. 'And get out of this place before I get tired of seeing you alive!'

"They seemed sort of hold-backy about it—then we touched 'em up a few. We had our guns inside our shirts so as not to appear too conspicuous, and they were kind of unhandy to get at; but one

glimpse was enough for the Idle Rich people when we did get 'em in sight. Bruce snuffed a cigar for one, and I kicked up a dust for two or three others, and then you'd have died to see 'em climb over each other to get into that automobile. There was a mixture of yells, screams, and the spatter of getting to going—and they just made a blue smear up the road with the whole gang hid under the cushions. All except the engineer—he was mostly too busy making her rear up and scoot.

WELL, old hoss," I said, as we picked up our sombreros, 'how do you like working life by this time?'

"Harve," he said, 'I can't quite figure it out. What did they want to go through that farce for anyhow? I thought it was just a lark and took it as a joke up to that sissy boy offering me the money. That made me mad.'

"I know all about it," I spoke up. 'It was a bet they'd made, and they took us for tramps. The carry-all driver told me.'

"He swore like a mule teamster. 'Do I look like a tramp?' he roared.

"Do I?" I asked.

"He looked me over critical. Then he melted into a grin. 'Harve,' he said, 'maybe I did take 'em too serious—we don't look any too classy. That girl was—hum!—well, she was a fine looker to have such a scrub name, at least.'

"We caught the nags and moseyed on into the city at that. There wasn't any more said about the affair after we got into camp, and by the time we'd done our stunts in a couple of performances I at least had forgotten all about it. Bruce hadn't, though; he demonstrated that nearly a week afterwards.

WE took a ride in the big play-place one day—Central Park, I believe they call it. We attracted considerable attention in our Wild West get-up,—Bruce on his big black, and me on old Spot, who was a show-nag all right. We had our hair ropes along, six-shooters, shaps, rattlesnake hatbands, and all. It was worth money to the show, Doc said, just for us to parade around town that way, and we didn't mind it.

"As we ambled along in a fox-trot, with other air seekers coming and going, passing groups of women and kids on benches, everybody looking us over with all their available eyes, we made quite a stir. A lot of people congregate in that park, and I was just thinking as we rode along how peculiar it was that the Lord could make such an everlasting mess of human beings, no two alike and yet not a good-looking individual in the bunch, when Bruce got suddenly excited.

"Harve," he said, 'there she goes! See her on the bay stepper there, just ahead?'

"She—who?" I didn't see anybody I knew.

"That girl—the one I wrangled with up the road that day.'

"So—ho!" I thought. 'Now for domestic trouble! Let her go,' I said out loud. 'She's none of our folks.' Bruce's eyes lit up with a gleam of deviltry. 'Come on,' he said. 'Here's where we play even.'

"I hadn't the least idea what he meant to do; but you know me,—I'm game to follow where anybody else dares to lead. We prodded the plugs up a little, and I saw her. It was Miss Scruggins all right, fresh and rosy as the Queen of Sheba, and looking powerful comely in a black horseback suit, with one of those little dude hats perched up on her doughnut-colored hair.

"And what do you think? With her was the original rummy that took the prize. One of these one-window-glass, silky-mustached, baggy-knee-breeches, narrow-shouldered, chinless wonders that smoke a big pipe and come in free of duty because they have no value set on 'em to figure the rate on. We rode up behind the couple in a few minutes—all trotting along at a pretty good clip.

"You take the Missing Link with the eyeglass," said Bruce, unhooking his rope, 'and I'll twine a few ringlets around this Scruggins lady.'

"I saw then what he was up to. It was considerable of a diversion. You can imagine what a row it would stir up for two wild and wolfish parties like us to lope alongside a pair of swells in a peaceable community like that, yell once or twice, and chuck a rope around 'em unexpected. Talk about your bees swarming! We sure started something!

"I guess I must have overdone my part a little. I caught that result of late hours and too much ancestry under one arm and over the other, and old Spot of course squatted back to take up the slack without being told, and you know what happened. We had a tender-foot on the gravel mighty shortly.

"Bruce just tied the girl to her horse and stopped the two of 'em intact. Then, hooray! Here come the crowd: in rigs, on horseback and afoot; men, women, kids, dogs, porters, newsboys, tramps, millionaires, and, last but not least, the police. I think the whole works were there before the monkey at the end of my lasso could get up, minus his lid and window glass.

"He got up wrathful. What did it mean? Did we know who he was? He was Sir Alabaster Ardmore or